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ABSTRACT

This report contains in summary format the recommendations from a 2-day summit on the nation's responsibility in relation to individuals with learning disabilities. The report contends that a national summit on learning disabilities was needed because of such factors as the large number of people affected by learning disabilities, the plethora of interventions needing to be validated, the need for dissemination of scientific progress, the need for collaboration between public and private agencies, the historic precedence set by the last summit in 1987, the need for a vehicle for looking to the future, and the evidence that outcomes for people with learning disabilities are unfavorable. The goal of the summit was to provide a blueprint for the future, encompassing issues from preschool through adulthood. Critical issues that emerged from the summit included early intervention, teacher development, collaboration, public awareness, and funding. Recommendations are offered in each of these areas, suggesting significant activities that must be undertaken to improve the lives of those with learning disabilities. An Interagency Committee is recommended, to include representatives from the Departments of Education, Labor, Justice, and Health and Human Services, as well as researchers, public policy experts, practitioners, and consumers. A list of summit participants concludes the report. (JDD)

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LEARNING DISABILITIES

A NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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REPORT

of the

SUMMIT ON LEARNING DISABILITIES

Washington, DC

September 20-21, 1994

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On September 20
and 21, 1994, the
**National Center
for Learning**

Disabilities convened a two-day
Summit entitled *Learning
Disabilities: A National Responsibility*.
This report contains in summary
format the recommendations from
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**NATIONAL
CENTER FOR
LEARNING
DISABILITIES**

FEBRUARY 1995

WHY DID WE NEED A NATIONAL SUMMIT ON LEARNING DISABILITIES?

THE ISSUE OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

The convergence of a number of crucial issues affecting those with learning disabilities led to the NCLD Summit.

Learning disabilities are referred to as the "hidden handicap" with good reason. Although approximately 15% of the population are affected by learning disabilities, they frequently go undetected due to lack of awareness by teachers, physicians and parents. The term learning disabilities covers a variety of disorders in the domains of listening, speaking, basic reading skills, reading comprehension and mathematic calculating and reasoning. These disabilities interfere with the ability to store, process or produce information, and are unexpected given the individual's general level of ability. Among the array of learning disabilities, deficits in basic reading skills are the most prevalent and often the most debilitating to children and adults. Learning disabilities can co-occur and be complicated by problems in attention and social skills. Learning disabled individuals also suffer from what one expert refers to as "the myth of mildness". Issues of stigma, and a lack of awareness and understanding of learning disabilities by the general public have contributed to the confusion. Universally adapted definitions do not yet exist in the learning disabilities field despite improved scientific knowledge.

PLETHORA OF INTERVENTIONS

Although learning disabilities are now known to be biological in origin, the treatments are more often educational. Parents and teachers alike are bemused by the array of "treatments" or "therapies" purporting to "cure" or help those with learning disabilities. Many of these therapies lack any validating evidence and if evidence exists, it has often not been successfully replicated. For the concerned parent and teacher, the cottage industry of treatments for those with learning disabilities can be confusing, often expensive, sometimes contradictory and very frustrating. The Summit aimed to overview all the current research, policy and practice, and to provide an objective picture of what is known and validated.

RECENT SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS

The most recent scientific discoveries about learning disabilities have exciting implications for helping children, but they have not been quickly translated into appropriate interventions for students with learning disabilities, particularly in the education system. Research progress has also not received the widespread attention it deserves in the popular press, given the large numbers of individuals affected. Research findings have not been efficiently disseminated to parents and particularly professionals. The Summit was a significant step in trying to bridge the gap between research and its practical application in the area of learning disabilities.

FRAGMENTATION IN THE FIELD

The field of learning disabilities is somewhat fragmented across a number of academic and professional disciplines. Each of these groups has focused on different aspects of LD, which has led to disagreements and differences in priorities. Often one group will be unaware of the findings and practices of other groups as there are few formal communication channels. The scope and purpose of many agencies which have been considered important in the learning disabilities field have been too narrowly defined. As a consequence, many agencies and organizations which need to know more about learning disabilities in order to affect change have been left out of the dialogue or have been uninformed. The Summit was an opportunity to bring together a broad range of people from a variety of backgrounds, experience, and expertise to widen the debate and include many government departments and private agencies. The Summit emphasized the critical notion of collaboration between public and private agencies creating an exchange of information and ideas.

HISTORIC PRECEDENCE

The last time a National Summit on Learning Disabilities had been convened was in 1987, following a mandate by the Health Research Extension Act of 1985 (Public Law 99-158) to establish an Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD). The major impetus for this congressional mandate was provided by a number of advocacy groups in the learning disabilities field. The ICLD was charged by Congress to review and assess federal research priorities, activities, and findings regarding learning disabilities. The ICLD recommended that several multidisciplinary learning disability research centers (LDRC's) be established, under the leadership of the NICHD, to discover, codify, and disseminate new knowledge relevant to the definition, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of learning disabilities. Over the last seven years, scientists have achieved a number of significant discoveries that bear directly on our

understanding of LD. A major purpose of the Summit was to ensure that these critical discoveries were heard by those who effect policy and by those responsible for the identification and education of youngsters and adults with LD.

NO VEHICLE FOR LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

There has been a pervasive view that the learning disabilities field has become stagnant, and mired in internal strife regarding definition, research methods, and treatments. The Summit sought to bring a sense of purpose and direction to all the voices in the field, and to help delineate and develop a consensus on what we need to do in the future to improve outcomes for the millions of people with learning disabilities.

EVIDENCE OF FAILURE FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

An overriding reason for the Summit was the fact that the outcomes for far too many people with learning disabilities are unfavorable. Despite the substantial gains that have been made via federal legislation for those with learning disabilities since the passage of Public Law 94-142, now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act, the uneven and uninformed implementation of the law has led to many tragic failures. The following statistics indicate the extent of the problem nationally and clearly show that early identification and intervention are vital for individuals affected by learning disabilities. There is a cost to pay for both individuals and society, if we do not provide better solutions.

- 50% of all students in special education in the public schools have learning disabilities -- 2.25 million children; Source: *U.S. Dept. of Education 1992*
- 75% - 80% of special education students identified as LD have their basic deficits in language and reading; Source: *National Institutes of Health*
- 35% of students identified with learning disabilities drop out of high school. This is twice the rate of their non-disabled peers. (This does not include the students who are not identified and drop out); Source: *National Longitudinal Transition Study (Wagner 1991)*
- 60% of adults with severe literacy problems have undetected or untreated learning disabilities; Source: *National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center 1994*

- 50% of juvenile delinquents tested were found to have undetected learning disabilities; Source: *National Center for State Courts and the Educational Testing Service 1977*
- Up to 60% of adolescents in treatment for substance abuse have learning disabilities; Source: *Hazelden Foundation, Minnesota 1992*
- 62% of learning disabled students were unemployed one year after graduating; Source: *National Longitudinal Transition Study (Wagner 1991)*
- 50% of females with learning disabilities will be mothers (many of them single) within 3-5 years of leaving high school; Source: *National Longitudinal Transition Study (Wagner 1991)*
- 31% of adolescents with learning disabilities will be arrested 3-5 years out of high school; Source: *National Longitudinal Transition Study (Wagner 1991)*
- Learning disabilities and substance abuse are the most common impediments to keeping welfare clients from becoming and remaining employed, according to the 1992 report from the Office of the Inspector General. Source: *Office of the Inspector General on "Functional Impairments of AFDC Clients"*.

INFORMING DECISION MAKERS

Finally, we believed that the Summit would provide invaluable information to those involved with the reauthorization of several key pieces of legislation in 1995, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Vocational and Adult Education Act.

With this as background, the Summit was a vehicle for ensuring that everyone understood that learning disabilities are a life long issue that do not disappear with age, but that with early remediation, individuals can be successful and productive members of society.

	WHY THE FOUR PANEL FORMAT?	
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The goal of the Summit, therefore, was to provide a blueprint for the future for all those with learning disabilities, encompassing issues from preschool through adulthood. In order to plan for the future, we asked the panelists to answer key questions in order to elicit where we are now in research, public policy and good practice and to hear the views of consumers. We

then asked the panelists if they could identify the gaps in their areas of expertise and invited them to suggest future actions. The four panels broadly covered Education, Labor, Justice and Health and Human Services, as all these government departments have a relationship to learning disabilities and address issues from childhood to adulthood. Two speakers presented in each of the four areas -- Research, Public Policy, Practice and Consumer Interest. We invited two additional panelists to react to what they heard and to add their perspectives to the discussion. We also invited leading members of the Clinton administration, and Democratic and Republican members of the Senate and Congress to speak on the issue of learning disabilities from departmental and national perspectives. The recommendations contained in this report are the outcomes of the two days of Summit presentations, debates and conclusions.

We chose four Program Co-Chairs for the Summit who had special experience and expertise and reflected major constituencies concerned with learning disabilities. These individuals volunteered their time and did not represent their official positions and organizations. Their guidance enabled us to choose an expert and diverse group of panelists. The Program Co-Chairs represented the domains of Research (*Reid Lyon, Ph.D., National Institutes of Health*); Public Policy (*Tom Hehir, Ed.D, Director, Office of Special Education Programs, Department of Education*); Practice (*Andrew Hartman, Ph.D., National Institute for Literacy*), and Consumer Interest (*Ann Kornblet, Learning Disabilities Association of America*)

	KEY ISSUES	
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As we studied the two days of presentations from the Summit, a number of critical issues began to emerge. These issues were consistently repeated and underlined by panelists and speakers from a wide variety of domains. These much echoed themes make up the key issues from the Summit, all of which had universal agreement, a sense of urgency and all offered some positive ways of moving forward. They are introduced here and discussed more fully later in the report.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Guest speakers, panelists and co-chairs repeatedly hammered home the need for early identification and intervention for those with learning disabilities. The evidence is overwhelming that many children with learning disabilities are failing under the present implementation of IDEA in the public education system. Across all age ranges, efforts must be made to provide assistance as early as possible. Individual states currently use one of several forms of "discrepancy formulae" to determine eligibility for services for children with learning

disabilities. In order to demonstrate this gap or discrepancy between IQ (aptitude) and achievement, students essentially must fail for two years. This criteria actually causes and promotes school failure for students with learning disabilities, and we know that school failure leads to lack of self-esteem, school dropout or other negative outcomes. Research funded by the NICHD has now established that the discrepancy formulae are invalid for the purpose of identifying children with reading disabilities, the most prevalent type of learning disability. For scientific, social and educational reasons the use of these formulae to diagnose reading disabilities should be discontinued and substantial efforts created to find other approaches.

The central aim in social and educational policy must be redirected towards the prevention of educational failure. The optimal approach is the early prediction and intervention with children in preschool and the early grades at school. As Secretary of Education Richard Riley pointed out at the Summit, 2.25 million students with learning disabilities are served in the public education system, just over 50% of all the children in special education. Many resources are allocated to school systems, but often too little, too late with a major and costly emphasis on the establishment of eligibility for service. The funds might be put to better use in preventive strategies.

Research indicates that 75-80% of students identified as LD have their primary deficits in basic language and reading skills, very specifically manifested in deficits in phonological awareness. Studies show that 74% of students who are unsuccessful readers in the third grade are still unsuccessful readers in the ninth grade. Clearly, the poor or non-readers do not acquire the same knowledge, academically, as their peers as they move through school -- a recipe for disaster.

In the early grades (kindergarten, grades 1 & 2) the need to demonstrate a discrepancy before receiving services should be replaced by a fixed formula or a more generic definition (as in Part H of IDEA). As the current reliable scientific data relates to reading and the majority of LD students have their primary deficit in this area, children should receive the extra help they need in the area of reading and language, when they begin to fall behind their peers.

In the early grades children with reading disability should be identified on reading performance relative to their age. Panelists repeatedly pointed out that early intervention is less costly in the long term both fiscally and socially.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Presenters on all panels emphasized the basic necessity to improve Teacher Preparation, not only with regard to educators in the preschool and school arena, but also those employed in adult and correctional education. NCLD's National Survey released at the Summit showed that 98% of parents of LD children surveyed believed that general educators were not trained to teach

their children (as the majority of children with learning disabilities are taught in the regular classroom). Although the teachers surveyed had a better view of their own preparedness, they strongly indicated that they would like more training to help students with learning disabilities.

The one area of significant research progress for those with learning disabilities has been in the domain of reading. There is now a great deal of knowledge about the cognitive and linguistic characteristics of reading disability and how these students need to be taught. The tragedy is that we are not exploiting what we know, as these substantial research gains are not being translated into interventions that would reduce reading failure. Illiteracy is at extraordinarily high levels in the United States, and improving the teaching of reading would have great societal value. If we were to consider analogies with the medical model, it is inconceivable that had similar research progress been made in Cancer or AIDS that this would not have been used immediately in intervention. Not to have done so would have constituted malpractice. Given the importance of reading to so many young lives, not to include the discoveries on reading disabilities into teacher training at all levels constitutes educational malpractice. It is hoped that over the next few years similar progress will be made in research in the other types of learning disabilities.

Teacher education at pre-service, graduate and in-service levels must begin with an analysis of how training programs are structured, how they are staffed at the professional level and how the criteria are set for graduation. Only 29 states require elementary teachers in training to have coursework specific to reading instruction, and even in those states only 12 hours of graduate training is mandated.

Teacher education provides little opportunity for the teachers in training to observe master teachers in action and to have consistent supervision and guidance in the practice of teaching. It is important that those who teach reading should only be certified if they have a variety of methodologies in order to teach all children how to read.

COLLABORATION

The importance of collaboration was stressed during each panel discussion and in each domain. Knowledge relative to learning disabilities has frequently been confined within different disciplines and specialty areas and has not been made easily available to the professionals and parents. As learning disabilities affect the whole age range, it is vital that public and private agencies have access to the most current information. As this is unlikely to happen by chance, a formal collaborative strategy needs to be developed, beginning with what First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton described as "a coherent strategy at the national level".

PUBLIC AWARENESS

A recent national study examining the level of awareness and understanding about learning disabilities among segments of the public has confirmed what many in the field had long suspected: that public understanding and general knowledge about LD are very superficial and misconceived. Mixed messages about what it means to have a learning disability are widespread and disturbing. It is time that a major National Public Awareness Campaign be undertaken to ensure that both the public and professionals have a clear idea about what a learning disability is and what it is not. No other disabling condition affects so many people and yet has such a low public profile and low level of public understanding as LD.

FUNDING

Education has been severely underfunded at the Federal level, losing ground over the years to other national priorities. At the end of the second World War, the United States spent 10% of the Federal budget on education, which was considered to be an investment in the nation's future. The funding of education has now dropped to 2% of the budget and most educational programs are funded at 50% of what Congress promised. Under IDEA only 20% of the money promised is appropriated, making the law an unfunded mandate. The Federal government needs to be a third equal partner with the state and local governments. In addition, the funds that are designated are often not spent on providing needed services to children but in establishing eligibility criteria and financing costly legal battles between parents and local school districts. Providing services for children who have already failed for a number of years is, of course, vastly more expensive than providing the extra help in the early grades and thereby preventing school failure. The experience of other countries would indicate that to intervene early is a more cost-effective and efficient use of taxpayer revenue.

**THESE FIVE KEY ISSUES WILL BE
EXAMINED FOR SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS.**

SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

EARLY INTERVENTION

► WHY?

The laws protecting the rights of individuals with learning disabilities, from the Education of Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142, now IDEA) through The Americans with Disabilities Act, promoted proactive ideals which are often implemented in a reactive way. As has been indicated, for example, a child must demonstrate two years of failure in order to receive the service established by PL 94-142. An adult must demonstrate that an act of discrimination has been committed in order to feel the full protection of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

There are many times when a knowledgeable intervention into a particular situation would avoid the approach of last resort and would promote a much improved climate for individuals with learning disabilities. We can effect that climate when the individuals, the professionals who work with and for them, and the advocates who promote their cause have a clear and deep knowledge of what interventions work well, when they work, and with regard to which set of circumstances. Those charged with public policy have, therefore, an obligation to work cooperatively, with adequately funded efforts, to promote the raising of this general level of understanding. This can most easily and effectively be done through:

- A. Research efforts directed at intervention at all levels of the age continuum;
- B. Description and selection of practices which, based on this research, will improve the position of those with learning disabilities;
- C. Clearly delineated dissemination channels and organs with which to promote the widest possible response to this information.

► HOW?

Research

These areas for research should be pursued vigorously, should be collaborative (i.e. cross agency), longitudinal and large scale. They should incorporate plans for dissemination and should always give careful thought to their potential for practical impact. Whether pure or applied, research on the public level must ultimately advance the human condition.

The following avenues are recommended:

- More large scale intervention studies to ascertain which specific interventions work best for which children in which setting and at which ages.
- More research or model programs in applied learning.
- Substantial research efforts to determine the very earliest ages and levels for which clear interventions provide helpful outcomes, and the types of interventions which are appropriate.
- The identification of the biological bases of learning disabilities including investigations in genetics and neurobiology.

Co-Morbidity

- Research into co-occurring disorders, particularly Attention Deficit Disorder(ADD) and LD.
- How does a learning disability influence the diagnosis of ADD?
- How can we determine the best set of criteria for identifying children with ADD in different settings and in relationship to treatment?
- How can we determine the efficacy of incorporating children with ADD and LD into the mainstream school environments -- specifically into inclusive, holistic teaching methods. How can we know the long term effects of stimulants (such as Ritalin)?
- Using the research into the heritability of dyslexia as a model, can we make similar strides in our knowledge base for other learning disabilities?
- Research which develops a scientifically based set of assessment procedures which are predictive and support scientific intervention strategies.

(These and other research efforts on co-morbidity extend the knowledge base which all professionals must have, including the classroom teacher, to effectively work with these high incidence populations, and which will lead to an attitude of PREVENTION.)

Later Age Intervention

- Research to further develop screening and intervention techniques applicable for adults with LD who attend literacy programs.
- Research to find similarities and differences in child and adult needs as related to current and future intervention studies. (When will it work for adults?)
- Research which gives clear direction to the concept of "appropriate accommodations".
- Research which develops measurements of literacy in the workplace and suggests appropriate workplace interventions.
- Research which clarifies the high risk factors associating learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency.
- Research which makes clear the patterns of LD juvenile offenders who become career criminals.
- Continued studies into the relationship of academic performance and attention, and their relationship to delinquency.
- Research to determine effective interventions for the LD adult prison population.
- Research into the specific subtypes of learning disabilities and their various relationships to varieties of behaviors.

Good Practice

We recommend there be support for:

- Programs which train teachers in research based strategies for the prevention of reading failure to include word structure, understanding reading acquisition, written, oral language, and study skills.
- Programs which address the development of positive environments that permit children with ADD and LD to do what they know.
- Development of model programs in applied learning.

- Development of a comprehensive and coherent strategy across agencies for implementing policies and testing practice.
- Development of effective literacy programs with a clearly defined LD component.
- Expenditure of Federal dollars to encourage greater state response to the program needs of individuals with LD.
- Replication and dissemination of already well established workplace programs.
- Encouragement and development of adult education programs which incorporate literacy, job training and basic education.
- Development of research based programs which offer mental health support for individuals with LD.
- Development of research based programs which advance the social skills abilities of individuals with LD, especially in the workplace.
- Development of research based model programs for the training of teachers in correctional systems.
- Development of model programs to increase parental involvement in the educational process in correctional facilities.
- Development of research based model programs which target minority issues of services and attitudes in the special education system, such as over-identification, under-identification, poverty, and socio-economic status.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

► **WHY?**

As was so compellingly stated by the panelists, no issue deserves greater national emphasis than the issue of teacher preparation. There is already a considerable lag between what is known about learning and what actually occurs in the classroom. The teacher is the paramount link

between the results of credible research and what practically must be brought to the learner. The teacher is the most significant delivery system we have for improving the lives and opportunities of individuals with learning disabilities. The teacher has often been called on to be the change agent for everyone's agenda, perhaps to the detriment of the education endeavor. No need can be greater than that all individuals, wherever they are on the age continuum, have access to life's offerings through the medium of language in all its forms and with special emphasis on reading.

Teaching is not just the province of the school in the traditional K - 12 sense. It is a major component of:

- a. Day care.
- b. Head Start and other early childhood programs.
- c. The general school.
- d. Colleges and universities.
- e. The workplace.
- f. Prisons and correctional system.
- g. Literacy programs.
- h. Personnel in extra-curricula activities such as coaches, music teachers, art instructors, bus drivers, cafeterias and maintenance staffs.

Each of these components has within it a significant population of individuals with learning disabilities (at least 10%), most of whom, according to substantial research, much of it sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, have or will have difficulty with language related tasks, particularly reading. A problem as vast as this, and with the dire consequences of doing nothing to alleviate it, demands a major national commitment to the upgrading of all teaching wherever and in what form it occurs. Teaching deserves the same level of focus as many other issues already on the national agenda.

Currently being supported through a number of agencies and efforts, teacher-related issues do not appear to be channeled through any single clearing house. A case could be made for incorporating many of the research and good practice efforts now being advanced and funded in several agencies and through several programs. Experience has shown that these efforts often exist in ignorance of others. There is also concern that strategies being developed as a result of the Goals 2000 initiative often pay little attention to high incidence disability populations such as those with LD.

► HOW?

A "National Institute on Teaching" should be charged to coordinate all efforts in educational research and best practices.

Research

- Which will enable teachers to design environments that help the child with ADD and LD;
- Which will be more consistent, comprehensive, and longitudinal than is current practice;
- Which will show how classroom contacts, instructional programs, and teaching methods affect the development, performance and adjustments of students with LD;
- Which will bring greater parity for educational concerns when compared to research dollars invested elsewhere;
- Which will apply to all learning disciplines the same level of understanding as has already been achieved in reading;
- Which will encourage a wider knowledge of teaching strategies and methodologies;
- Which will continue to build the research base on which national standards for teaching can be built;
- Which will encourage the delineation of a professional body of knowledge, such as language and reading, which must be developed for teachers so that there can be accountability and controls;
- Which will improve training for professionals who work with LD adults such as in rehabilitation counseling and psychology;
- Which will provide the base by which higher education programs can be redefined and reconceptualized, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Which will support the basis for developing certification requirements for the teaching of adults with LD;
- Which will further heighten our understanding of the linkage between the elements involved in learning, and the practice of aberrant behavior;

- Which will provide a basic knowledge to personnel in a wide variety of life activities such as the police, court service workers and correctional officers;
- Which will explore the full range of physical, emotional, and social health issues of children and adults.

Good Practice

- Through use of federal dollars identify and disseminate information about teacher preparation programs of high quality;
- Provide support for programs which clarify and promote a greater understanding of English as a Second Language to LD;
- Achieve the development of model programs to demonstrate the employment of useful assistive technology in all aspects and areas of teaching;
- Ensure that federal dollars are only given to those Universities involved in pre-service teacher training which teach a variety of reading techniques and validated practice.

In the area of professional development an opportunity exists with the Reauthorization of IDEA to provide a cost-effective and direct method of re-training teachers of reading. A national telecommunications based demonstration program needs to be developed to improve the teaching of reading. This in-service training method is currently being used to upgrade the teaching of mathematics. It is logical to use the same cost-effective, efficient and direct method to inform elementary teachers and special educators about our increased knowledge in the teaching of reading, particularly as it relates to children with learning disabilities.

COLLABORATION

► WHY?

As indicated in the introductory section, learning disabilities cross all lines of life activity, and occur throughout the life of an individual. Too often, the services provided, and efforts made on behalf of those with LD are scattered, providing poor transitions from one phase of life to the next. The compartmentalization of issues and services, often directed from different

agencies and organizations, leads to a lack of cohesiveness in the response to individuals with learning disabilities, wherever they may fit on the age continuum. The Clinton Administration appears to have done an excellent job of coordinating activities and policies across agency lines and it is clearly an imperative that, for the LD population, all issues should be viewed from every point of view. Collaborative efforts can only result in the very best of possible outcomes. Each aspect of the experience of learning disabilities has an impact on and relates to the other aspects of the problem.

► HOW?

Collaborations should not be left merely to chance, but should be formalized and systematic. To the greatest degree possible they should include representation from researchers, public policymakers, practitioners, and consumers. Areas of collaboration should include but not be limited to the following:

- Working together at the Cabinet level (HHS, Justice, Labor, and Education) to create a coherent policy strategy for learning disabilities through the life span. This might be done through an interagency council;
- Cross agency efforts to forge consistent and comprehensive approaches to research in learning disabilities;
- Eliminating with all speed, strategies which do not work and working firmly together on what does work;
- Developing a strong commitment, cross agency and organizationally, to create a coherent strategy for adult issues in learning disabilities;
- Broadening the scope of research design to include planning input from individuals who are outside of the research community, including practitioners and consumers;
- Encouraging multitudes of partnerships of all kinds between the private and public sectors to carry forth aspects of the learning disabilities agenda;
- Monitoring the efficacy and advancement of knowledge of the linkages between Literacy and LD, and Juvenile Delinquency and LD.

AWARENESS

► WHY?

As we know that learning disabilities affect 15% of the population, and as earlier-cited statistics demonstrate, there is a severe economic and social price to be paid for doing nothing with regard to this group. Even with the protection of law and the earnest efforts of the government and many private organizations and agencies over the last three decades we are far from completing the task of fully integrating this group into all that society has to offer. This is a major issue in the United States and one which, even against many competing needs, deserves the highest priority. That it has not yet received this status indicates that the public has not perceived the importance of the topic. There is evidence that the general public knows little or nothing about learning disabilities and that what it does know is often faulty or misguided. In such a climate it is imperative that public and private efforts be launched to raise the general awareness of the issue.

► HOW?

- Government agencies supporting research should require an information dissemination plan as part of every financial award given, even when the research being supported may not have immediate practical application. The information dissemination plan should target a broad based national audience. It should utilize state of the art techniques for mass communication;
- Research design directed at educational advancement should incorporate input from educational providers, such as teachers. This will help to assure greater accessibility to, and utility of, research findings by practitioners;
- National LD organizations and private funders should build large scale coalitions in order to maximize the delivery of the message to the largest possible audience, and to assure the clarity of the message. (This will necessitate setting aside individual organization agendas and sometimes philosophical conditions for the national good);
- Awareness campaigns should be directed to specific targeted audiences such as educators, employers, unions, the media, correctional system personnel and all other systems and agency stakeholders in the issues of learning disabilities;

- Awareness campaigns should present themes such as the application of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) to learning disabilities so that all rights and protection under the law are properly understood by the public at large as well as those for whom the protection was intended;
- Highlight the need for more adequate instructional and support materials for use with individuals with learning disabilities. Use this information to bring about an awareness of realistic and reasonable accommodations;
- Target issues of importance to parents so that they understand their own and their children's rights, especially with regard to the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) mandated by IDEA;
- Develop a multi-lingual approach to dissemination;
- Invite organizations from the African-American and Latino communities to participate in public awareness campaigns.

FUNDING

► WHY?

Many of the issues listed above require financial support either from the State/Local or Federal governments, the private sector or both. In a climate of conflicting demands placed on an ever decreasing money pool there is an urgent need to evaluate and prioritize the efficacious use of existing monies, as well as to insist that the government live up to its continuously unfunded mandates by supplying the funds to get the job done. This may require the re-allocation of funds directed elsewhere to redress past inequities.

► HOW?

Funding support is essential to:

- Place teacher preparation -- the upgrading of an entire profession -- high on the national agenda. Successful outcomes for LD individuals should not be allowed to fall on the poor or ineffective training of personnel involved with individuals with learning disabilities. The Federal

government, to the extent that it possibly can, should use the power of the dollar to support the elevation of professional training;

- Develop a national commitment of funding education which equals the lofty ideals expressed in much of the recent educational reform legislation, such as Goals 2000. Currently, research for education is far outstripped by funding for all other nationally supported research;
- Hold accountable the Congress, to the best degree that public insistence can be mustered, for keeping its funding promises. It currently funds at less than 50% of what it mandates. Under IDEA only 20% of its funding promises have been kept;
- Make major funding efforts to cover all levels of development at which the issue of learning disabilities is a reality, from the PREVENTION laden opportunity at the preschool, day care level, through the many transitions which ultimately lead to the workplace.
- The funding view has been very short term. Funds should be directed towards interventions at the earliest possible time. In the long run this will at the least cut costs in special education and juvenile correctional services.

	NEXT STEPS	
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Clearly, the Summit, *Learning Disabilities: A National Responsibility*, brought forth a multitude of ideas and questions which deserve the greatest degree of attention possible. It is very certain that there are other issues also and certainly further questions emanating from those already presented. There is an interrelationship among the various aspects presented and also a mutual responsibility among the various domains represented at the Summit (Education, Labor, Justice, Health and Human Services.) If the Summit pointed out a major fact, it is that learning disabilities cannot be ignored as trivial, an isolated event, or assumed to be a well treated issue. The statistics cited in the introduction to this report indicate unequivocally that we are far from solving the problems surrounding learning disabilities. The Summit performed a superb function of bringing many of the critical elements together in one place and in acknowledging the life long nature of the condition. It is in our nation's best interest, as well as those who do suffer from learning disabilities, that the momentum from the Summit be carried forward.

THE FOLLOWING STEPS ARE RECOMMENDED

- Develop, with all speed, an **Interagency Committee** to include representatives from the Departments of Education, Labor, Justice, and Health and Human Services, as well as researchers, public policy experts, practitioners, and consumers. Since major advances have come from NIH sponsored research, **it is recommended that the Department of Health and Human Services take on the leadership role.**

The Committee should be charged to further delineate the national agenda as proposed in this report, add items where necessary, and bring forth recommendations for research support, regulatory activity, legislation, and combined private and public collaborations and initiatives. The Committee should report frequently to the field, agencies, and legislators.

- Bring to bear all energy from advocacy groups, agencies, and sympathetic legislators on **the Reauthorization of IDEA, and the Adult Education Act.** Advances in the civil rights of individuals with disabilities have been a result of Federal, not necessarily State efforts. In the current climate of decentralization of the Federal government it will be absolutely necessary to bring unity to the effort to preserve those rights which have already been won. It will be equally important to bring implementation issues to the forefront at the State level so that all services in learning disabilities and literacy have a fair and even response around the country.
- Coordinate through public and private partnerships **awareness campaigns** which are well executed, collaborative, and raise the general understanding of the issues of learning disabilities and their potential devastating consequences both to the country, the community and to the individuals themselves.

These three efforts alone will go a long way to advancing the ideas elucidated in the Washington Summit. In any event, failure to do anything will clearly result in further devastating consequences which our nation can ill afford, which run counter to the values for which our nation stands, and which allow a vulnerable and sizable community to stand alone without the benefit of a reasonable safety net. We know much about the problems. It is high time to devote equal energy to the solutions. The National Center for Learning Disabilities is eager to see the work carried forward and to participate to the fullest degree that it can to those solutions.

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Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT)

Chairman, Subcommittee on Children, Family, Drugs and Alcoholism, United States Senate.

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NCLD WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR SPECIAL GUESTS, MODERATORS AND PANELISTS:

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First Lady of the United States

Richard Riley
Secretary, U.S. Department of Education

Donna Shalala, Ph.D.
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Robert Reich
Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor

John Wilson
Acting Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

Senator James Jeffords (R-VT)

Congresswoman Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky (D-PA)

Congressman Major Owens (D-NY)

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MORE ON THE SUMMIT: The National Center for Learning Disabilities has complete transcripts of the National Summit on Learning Disabilities, including each presentation. A book of the Summit proceedings will be published in the fall of 1995 by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

The Summit has also been preserved in a videotaped presentation. Videotapes of the entire program as well as each of the four panels -- Education, Health and Human Services, Labor and Justice -- are available to the public. For information on obtaining the published and/or videotaped proceedings, please contact NCLD, 381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1420, New York, NY 10016 (212) 545-7510.



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Since 1977, the **National Center for Learning Disabilities** has become a leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of millions of Americans affected by learning disabilities. Services for children and adults include national information and referral, educational programs, raising public awareness and understanding, and legislative advocacy. NCLD works cooperatively with the other major learning disabilities and educational organizations to bring the best resources to the greatest number of affected individuals across America.